

University of Toronto

Faculty of Music

FACULTY RECITAL SERIES

William Aide, piano



**Saturday, February 5, 1994
8 pm**

Walter Hall

Edward Johnson Building

PROGRAMME

Ballade in G minor, Op. 23

Frédéric Chopin
(1810 - 1449)

XI (1990)

Walter Buczynski
(b. 1933)

Fantasie
Berceuse
Barcarolle

(World Premiere)

Ballade in A flat major, Op. 47

Frédéric Chopin

Ballade in F minor, Op. 52

INTERMISSION

Gaspard de la Nuit

Maurice Ravel
(1875 - 1937)

Ondine
Le gibet
Scarbo

poems by Aloyius Bertrand recited by Margaret Visser

PROGRAMME NOTES

First Ballade in G minor, Op. 23

Frédéric Chopin

Third Ballade in A flat major, Op. 47

Fourth Ballade in F minor, Op. 52

Unlike the other leading piano composers of his generation, Schumann and Liszt, Chopin avoided the sort of evocative romanticism suggested in picturesque titles. Schumann may have had his *Carnaval* and Liszt his *Jeux d'eau*, but when Chopin's music bore specific titles (*Raindrop Prelude*, *Winter Wind Etude*) these were mere sales-promotional inventions of his publishers. The instrumental ballade -- a genre Chopin initiated -- is analagous to the then-much-cultivated poetry of legendary antiquity ("Ossian," Herder, Goethe), but Chopin leaves the specifics to his listener's imagination. For his Second *Ballade*, he said a narrative poem by his compatriot Adam Mickiewicz had inspired him, but the literary connections are imprecise; for the other three *Ballades* he provided no such hint.

The scene-setting opening bars of the First *Ballade* give way to a sort of hesitant "valse triste," later juxtaposed with a more sentimental major-key melody, and developed to a starkly dramatic finish -- suggesting a grisly outcome to the story. By contrast, the start of the Third *Ballade* may represent a dialogue of female and male voices, similar to Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. Despite conflicts, arabesques, and other adventures, the resolution of the implied narrative here is bright and positive. The Fourth *Ballade* begins ruminatively: a story-teller perhaps invites hearers to imagine a long-ago time and place. Surprisingly, these tentative phrases grow into one of the main thoughts of the piece, interweaving with two longer melodies, both strongly profiled, in a succession of episodes and developments presaging Wagner in their harmonic and textural richness. The musical "tale" this time ends in a spirit of tragic elevation.

- John Beckwith

XI: *Fantasie - Berceuse - Barcarolle*

Walter Buczynski

For the first performance of this new work, Prof. Buczynski has provided the following note:

"Over three-and-a-half years ago my first grandson was born -- the perfect occasion to write a lullaby. I decided to write a Berceuse for him, not realizing that this would be the beginning of a larger work. While rummaging through some of my scores, I noticed Volume XI of Chopin's piano music, and the titles; *Fantasie*, *Berceuse*, *Barcarolle* stared me in the face. The titles were the models for the work: *Fantasie*, a free flight of fancy; *Berceuse*, a lullaby; and *Barcarolle*, a moderate 6/8 piece with an accompaniment suggestive of the movement of the waves and the boat."

Walter Buczynski is a professor of composition and music theory with the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. His sixtieth birthday was recently celebrated in a special concert broadcast by CBC Radio. In addition to his prolific compositional output he has recorded as solo pianist both his own music and works from the classical and romantic repertoires, especially Chopin.



Aloysius Bertrand (1807 - 42) wrote his *Gaspard de la nuit* in 1836. The title name is also the invented persona with which he signed himself. The collection of fifty-one prose-poems and thirteen "pièces détachées," published posthumously, was drawn to Ravel's attention by his friend the pianist Ricardo Viñes. Ravel composed his piano tryptich in 1908. The titles of the three movements are taken from three of Bertrand's poems, and at Ravel's behest the poems themselves appeared alongside the music in the original edition.

Particularly close parallels exist between the continuity of the music and that of the poem in each case. The song of the water-sprite Ondine stands out in relief against a wizardly shimmer of "water-music" figurations. Towards the end, the shimmer disappears briefly, and a quiet single-line phrase suggests the poem's change of viewpoint, from Ondine to the narrator. The grim funérailles of *Le gibet* unfold against an inexorably repeated bell-note, as if during the play of other images the figure of the hanged man is always present. *Scarbo* depicts a fantastic gnome (out of an E.T.A. Hoffmann tale, maybe) in gesturally-erratic scherzo figures corresponding to the bizarre phrases of the poem. Details such as the organ resonances of the cathedral, the little bells, and the snuffed-out candle at the end, all have their musical counterparts.

The composer said he conceived *Gaspard* as a work of "transcendent virtuosity" (a reference to Liszt's *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*, which Ravel much admired), one which might rival or even exceed the non-plus-ultra complexities of Balakirev's *Islamey*. His achievement here show both precision and originality: the ripples of *Ondine* are exactly designed for performance; in *Le gibet* the soft pedal and steady slow pulse are specified to be maintained throughout; and the scales doubled in major seconds are only one of several unprecedented pianistic features of *Scarbo*.

- John Beckwith

William Aide, pianist

William Aide received his musical degrees from the University of Toronto and the Juilliard School of Music. In 1962, he won first prize in the CBC Talent Festival and the Canada Council Award for Young Performing Artists. He is noted not only as a solo recitalist, but also as a chamber musician and accompanist. Mr. Aide has premiered concerti by Canadian composers Srul Irving Glick, Samuel Dolin, Peter Koprowski and Walter Buczynski and collaborated with conductors Walter Susskind, Charles Dutoit, Mario Bernardi, Raffi Armenian, Arthur Fiedler and Andrew Davis. William Aide participated in three premieres of works by tonight's annotator, John Beckwith: *Arctic Dances*, *Six Songs to Poems by e.e. cummings* and *Keyboard Practice*. He played the Beckwith *Concerto Fantasy* with the CJRT Orchestra in 1988.

Mr. Aide has made several recordings; among them are the complete Suzuki method repertoire comprising six compact discs, the Chopin 24 *Etudes* and the Brahms *Cello Sonatas* with cellist Ofra Harnoy. In addition to performances on the BBC and CBC, he has concertized in New York City, the former Soviet Union, Chicago, San Francisco and throughout Canada.

In February 1993 he served as Artist-in-Residence at the Aix-en-Provence Conservatory of Music. "One could detect two major strengths from his playing: the extreme quality of his sonority and the sovereign master of musical time." This quote was taken from a review in *Le Meridional*, Marseille of his performance at the Salle Campra while in residence.

He came to the music faculty at the University of Toronto in 1978 and currently serves as Chairman of the Keyboard Division.

The Faculty of Music welcomes distinguished author, journalist and broadcaster, Margaret Visser, who reads her own translations of the poems from *Gaspard de la Nuit*.



The Faculty of Music cordially invites you to attend other events in the Edward Johnson Building. Throughout the year, there are many recitals by Faculty members and students, as well as orchestra, band, choral, jazz and opera performances. Information is available in the Calendar of Events, which may be picked up in the Main Lobby near the Box Office. For more information, telephone 978-3744.

Contributions for the scholarships or operating funds (payable to the University of Toronto and directed to the Faculty of Music) are most welcome and are eligible for a receipt for income tax purposes. Please address donations or enquiries to Professor Paul Pedersen, Dean, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1. Telephone 978-3761. Thank you.



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